

Chapter 6 Into the Future

The terrible year of 1992 was a time when things began to change for the royal family. At first, the government promised to pay for the repairs to Windsor Castle.



In November a great fire started at Windsor Castle, the Queen's favourite home. Many rooms were destroyed.

But the people of Britain were angry. 'The Queen is rich,' they said. 'It's her house. She can pay!'

This was not a simple problem. The royal family's money is not all theirs – a lot of it belongs to the nation. But the royal family is a very expensive British tradition. People were working hard to pay their taxes. They didn't want those taxes to help the royal family. Life was difficult enough already.

Finally, the Queen agreed to pay for the repairs. For the first time, she opened Buckingham Palace to the public in summer; this helped to get the forty million pounds for the repairs. Now you can see inside the 200-year-old palace for the first time.

Windsor Castle is a much older building; the earliest part was built in about 1080. It was already a favourite place for visitors. A number of rooms were destroyed in the fire of November 1992, but luckily most of them were empty at the time. The fire was terrible, and the repairs took six years, but the results are wonderful.

The royal family also realized that they had to save money. They decided that the royal ship, the *Britannia*, was too expensive. In the past it was important for the royal family to travel the world by sea. But in these days of easy air travel, this isn't necessary. In 1997, they said goodbye to their favourite ship.

The Queen also agreed to pay taxes. The question of taxes goes back a long way in the royal family. In 1842 the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, asked Queen Victoria to pay taxes. They agreed on a sum between them. King George VI, Queen Elizabeth's father, also discussed taxes with the government, but he decided not to pay them. Now his daughter agreed that she should pay taxes to the nation again. Elizabeth also decided to pay less money each year to some 'royals' who are not very close relatives of the main royal family.

The difficult year of 1992 began the changes in the royal family, but of course 1997 was also terrible. In that year Princess Diana died. Diana was also making a new life for herself when she died. She was strong and healthy now. She loved her two young sons and her work for charity. Finally, it seemed, she could put the past behind her and find new love. She and Dodi al Fayed were very happy just before the car accident which killed them both. Perhaps they were planning to marry.

At first, people remembered Diana with tears and with flowers. But soon they began to give money too. Millions of pounds arrived to help Diana's favourite charities. Her story continues; there are plans to build hospitals and make gardens in her name. Her life is the subject of books now, and her picture is on many gifts. Often money from these sales goes to the special Princess Diana charity. Many good things have already come out of her life, and in the future we will see even more.

Diana's body lies on an island at her old family home, Althorp Park. Each year for a short time this is open to visitors. People come and remember her there. They remember her difficult life and her wonderful work.

Diana helped us to look to the future, and the royal family is ready to change. But we in Britain have to think too about the kind of royal family that we really want and the needs of this new Britain. The nation and the royal family work as a team.



Prince William and Prince Harry are now the royal family of the future. They are almost young men now. William looks like his mother – he is tall, with fair hair, and he even hangs his head shyly like Diana! He is studying at Eton, a famous school near Windsor Castle. He often goes to Windsor Castle for tea with his grandmother.

Since his mother died, William has helped to look after Harry.



*Prince William and Prince Harry are now the royal family of the future.
They are almost young men now.*

his younger brother. Harry is an open, friendly boy, and he is at Eton too. Nothing will ever be the same again without Diana, but many people care for the boys, at home and at school. Their father, Charles, spends much more time with them now. In the past, he preferred to take them out only for traditional country sports, like fishing. Now he takes them out for more modern fun – they have heard the Spice Girls, and watched World Cup football!

Everyone hopes that the boys have a bright future. The newspapers have agreed to stay away from them; reporters and television helped to make Diana's life very unpleasant. The young Princes already understand the important traditions of the British royal family, but Diana gave them something very special. She showed them today's world too, with its fun and its problems. Perhaps the new story of the royal family will really begin when King William is crowned in Britain.